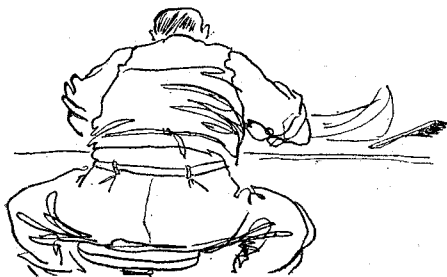


writings, to the outstanding example of the Soviet Union in terms of ethnic democracy."

While the essential emphasis of Dr. Aptheker's polemic is against Myrdal's analysis — that is, his ideology — the major portion of his work, in terms of space, is taken up with pointing out the errors of fact with which Myrdal's work is filled and which seriously vitiate its value even as a collection of data. These errors, running into the dozens, include the amazing assertion that science shows the Negro to be inferior! In a detailed challenge of these errors which bulwark Myrdal's false philosophy, Aptheker presents the historical, sociological and psychological facts in refutation.

As opposed to Myrdal, who claims that for the Negro problem the "scientific solution is far beyond the horizon," Aptheker concludes: "The oppression of the American Negro has served as a stumbling block to the forces of progress and freedom for the entire nation throughout its history. It must no longer be tolerated or permitted. In fighting it we fight not only for the Negro, but for all Americans."

In an introduction to the critique Doxey A. Wilkerson provides an outline of the current aspects of the Negro people's struggle. The facts which he



Irene Goldberg.

presents complement Dr. Aptheker's thesis that the basis of Negro exploitation is to be found in our economic system.

Herbert Aptheker's work in the field of Negro history has been of notable value. His criticism of Myrdal, illumined with Marxist insight, is another signal service to the Negro people and their allies. This is a book which should be widely circulated; it can help dispel the smokescreen which has been generated by *An American Dilemma*. Dr. Aptheker has spoken well, and convincingly. It is the duty of the progressive movement to ensure that he is heard.

One other thing might be said: I believe that to a large measure Myr-

dal's ideological blitz has been a victory by default. Many have been misled in the absence of a truly definitive work on the subject. There is urgent need for such a work. And this must stand as a challenge to the Marxists of America, specifically the Communists who stand in the forefront of the fight for Negro rights. *An American Dilemma* must be replaced by *An American Answer* to the Negro question.

## One Japan?

THE CHRYSANTHEMUM AND THE SWORD, by Ruth Benedict. Houghton Mifflin. \$3.

OVER the years certain characteristics have been assigned to the people of different countries. The French are still witty and volatile; the Germans ponderous and dull; the Russians, when they are not brooding, have become enigmatic. The Japanese have also been victims of this particular kind of character assassination. For some time now, wide-eyed tourists and newspapermen have been rehashing the picture handed down to us by Lafcadio Hearn: The Japanese are happy, thoughtless little creatures who flutter about aimlessly in a world of tea ceremonies and Japanese gardens. On the other hand, Hollywood had presented us with the picture of the sly little man in horn-rimmed glasses who says one thing and always means another.

Miss Benedict's book does not belong in this category. In it she makes a serious attempt to cut through the clichés and to answer the question: What makes the Japanese Japanese? How do they think, act and feel differently from the people of other countries? She tries to discover the people behind the tintype. Unfortunately, although she succeeds in killing off some of the old clichés, she adds a number of new ones of her own.

Miss Benedict tries to look at the Japanese through the eyes of a social scientist, which means simply to see them as they are. Her approach is clinical. With scientific detachment she tries to get at the roots of their behavior by examining their customs, their habits, their morals, their life in school and the home, their formal philosophy as well as the "intensely human commonplaces" that give richness and meaning to their existence. There is, she shows, no particular mystery about the psychology of the

Japanese. They act the way they do because they are taught to act that way. From earliest youth, they are trained to discipline their emotions, avoid shame and humiliation, respect their elders and look down on their inferiors. The child is the father of the man.

The basic pattern of the Japanese, Miss Benedict finds, is their "reliance on order and hierarchy." "Behavior that recognizes hierarchy is as natural to them as breathing." In this rigid and well-defined universe, every person, from the lowest peasant to the Emperor, has a predestined place. This applies to feeling and the emotions as well. Emotions which are permissible in certain situations are not permissible in others. The hierarchy applies to nations also. In this hierarchy, of course, the Japanese were convinced that Japan was at the very top.

The pattern traced by Miss Benedict is simple and neat and has a certain appealing unity of structure. But it is also static and one-dimensional. Miss Benedict keeps building on it until it finally cracks of its own weight. In her world, character does not exist in time and space. The Japanese are incorrigibly feudal. They not only rely on order and hierarchy now; they always have, and they always will—or at least for a "long, long time." Even popular elections won't change them very much, because their attitudes are "inbred," or, if they are not "inbred," they are learned so early in life that it amounts to the same thing. Their character is not the result of a feudal order, but the cause of it. From this, she draws the comforting conclusion that the Japanese are "not revolutionists." She then picks up the slogan of all the pro-Emperor reactionary parties in Japan—that "Western" democracy (whatever that is) is unsuited to the Japanese character. That character seems to require some special kind of democracy (which Miss Benedict conveniently forgets to define and which presumably would include the Emperor). In discussing events since V-J Day, it is, therefore, natural for her to bestow an accolade on General MacArthur for perpetuating the Imperial Family — with its long tradition of militarism and feudal oppression—and for helping to establish this new "Eastern" kind of democracy. Miss Benedict gives the blessing of science to our imperialist policy in the Far East.

Miss Benedict is Freudian to the bitter end. The recent war, it seems,

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was also due to the Japanese character. Hitler may have gone to war to get his hands on Russian oil, but the Japanese "derive their aggression in a different way. They need terribly to be respected in the world. They saw that military might had earned respect for great nations and they embarked on a course to equal them." The Manchukuo Development Company apparently was an afterthought. All the evidence uncovered since the end of the war disposes of Miss Benedict's theory on this subject. The militarists, although they played heavily on the theme of "self-respect" in their propaganda to the people, never deluded themselves about what they were fighting for.

There are no classes in Miss Benedict's Japan. There are only "the Japanese." Rich man, poor man, exploited worker and billionaire "zaibatsu" all adhered to the same code of conduct. This is, of course, simply nonsense. Every schoolboy, for example, is taught to revere frugality and simplicity. But while the workers and peasants adhered to this standard from sheer necessity, the "zaibatsu" and militarists, with their mistresses, their pornographic pictures and their orgies of Sun Tory whiskey, were notorious for their prodigal living. Miss Benedict makes no distinction between the two groups.

She also makes the mistake of failing to distinguish between formal codes of conduct and the actual code. She emphasizes, for example, the importance of "honor," "shame" and "moral responsibility" in Japanese life. When the war ended, the Old Japan Hands predicted that the militarists would all rush for their hara-kiri knives to atone for their failures. Actually, nothing of the sort took place. They merely went into retirement for a while and then set up shop as exponents of "dem-ok-rasie." The new Japanese "Liberal Party" is filled with them. "Between the idea and reality falls the shadow."

Events that have taken place since the end of the war have fortunately disproved many other of Miss Benedict's assumptions. Some 4,000,000 people—among them almost 1,000,000 women—have joined the trade unions; and about 1,000,000 of Miss Benedict's "non-revolutionary" Japanese voted for the Communist Party in the last election. On street corners and at private gatherings, it is not unusual to hear people mimicking the

Emperor. These developments are surprising for a country where hierarchy was as "natural as breathing."

The basic error in Miss Benedict's work is her failure to understand that character exists only in the here-and-now. It is always moving (even when it seems to be moving the least), reflecting and at the same time changing the great social forces around it. That is what makes it so rich and complex—the subtle and ever-shifting interplay between the old and the new. With the growth of monopoly capitalism in Japan, the old patterns of behavior began to disintegrate and the people were impelled to reach out for new ones that would enable them to cope with their new problems. The growth of the labor movement during the Twenties was one reflection of this. The suppression of this movement did not eliminate the growing hostility to hierarchy; it merely forced the people to repress their feelings. Miss Benedict, who is so sensitive to the effect of repression on children, seems to assume that this hostility disappeared into thin air. That is why she is so unprepared for the great changes that have taken place during the past year. The end of the war merely removed the lid from the kettle; the pot was already boiling.

Discussion of the effect of this repression on the Japanese character and the growth of the new behavior patterns within the shell of the old would have given additional flesh and blood to Miss Benedict's portrait and would have provided the basis for understanding the changes that must inevitably take place in the future. Her viewpoint in this book is particularly hard to understand, for she has always identified herself with the progressive viewpoint on the vital issues in American life.

One can only feel that she would have arrived at different conclusions had she had the opportunity to visit Japan after the war and gather her material first-hand.

DAVID ARNOLD.

## Animals & Witches

YES AND NO STORIES, by George and Helen Papashvilly. Harper. \$2.50.

FOR parents who have exhausted their repertoire of stock-in-trade children's stories, here is welcome relief. Although the over-flap promotion of the Papashvillys' latest collec-